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SEPTEMBER, 2023  
VOLUME 20, ISSUE 9  
Edition #239



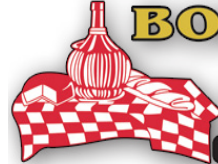
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## Saying Good Bye to a Local Hero

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Laip to local control.



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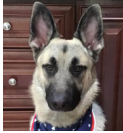
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## VALLEY PATRIOT OF THE MONTH

### Still Serving, Chris Manning & the American Legion

John Cuddy

VALLEY PATRIOT HERO REPORTER

Haverhill native Chris Manning is the current Commander of American Legion Post 4 in Haverhill, Massachusetts. Chris grew up in Haverhill, one of twelve children, his three brothers all served in the US Military. His dad served in

the South Pacific during World War II, as a Machinist Mate First Class. His older brother served in the US Navy in Vietnam, as part of the carrier-based air war against the Communists. His younger brother served in both the US Navy and US Air Force. Of his eighty-six nieces and nephews, one niece served over twenty years in the US Air Force,

retiring as a Chief Master Sergeant. Chief Master Sergeant is the highest Air Force enlisted rank.

Chris Manning, served during the height of Cold War. Our interview, started with a discussion on his military service, a very modest man, he turned it towards his service to his fellow Veterans. Working within the American Legion, Chris spends most of his free time helping Veterans.

Millions of Americans served during the Cold War, 1946 to 1991. The United States and the Soviet Union were the key players, as they were the two superpowers of the world. Both nations lost troops during the Cold War, which many civilians think was not a real war. Very few, if any US Military Veterans take this stand on Cold War service. Many incidents occurred, that could have turned out tragic, if quick solutions were not made, by politicians and military leaders on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Leaders, both from United States and the Soviet Union saved the world from a nuclear war.

The United States lost around three hundred and eighty-two military members during the so called, Cold War. Some of the casualties came through direct fire enemy action, particularly in Korea after the 1953 Armistice. Other



Military members lost their lives, not as the result of engagements, but from "incidents" between the Communist Bloc and the US Military. Historians find this number to be fluid, as incidents such as the attack on the USS Liberty AGTR-5 and the capture of the USS Pueblo AGER-2, produced casualties. For the US Navy sailor killed on the USS Pueblo, and the thirty-four US Navy sailors who died on the USS Liberty, the Cold War, was not so "Cold."

A graduate of Whittier Technical High School, Chris served in the US Army as an engineer, out of Fort Dix, NJ. He also traveled widely on the US Army rifle team, shooting his M-14 rifle at targets from 50 yards to 600 yards away. Serving from 1978-1984, he left the US Army as a Sargent. After leaving the US

HERO: PAGE 29



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# Thank You Lawrence General Hospital!

Last month, a team of doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals at Lawrence General Hospital feverishly worked around the clock for more than a week to save the life and stabilize the vital signs of our Valley Patriot publisher Tom Duggan.

While we are holding the details of why and how this all happened for a full story in next month’s newspaper, we could not let this edition go to print without showing our profound gratitude for the multiple miracles these brave men and women were able to pull off over the first nine days Duggan struggled in a coma and on a ventilator in the intensive care unit of the LGH.

Tom, himself wanted us to report that once he was transferred out of ICU and went into a regular room (in the Hamlet building) of LGH, the nurses and doctors continued to provide what he called “a far superior level of care and professionalism” than he ever expected.

“At first, I thought they were giving me the VIP treatment because I thought, maybe they knew who I was, or that I work in the media, so they were stepping up their game,” Duggan said. “But, after being in the hospital for more than 21 days I came to realize that they treated everyone this way - and that made me feel even better about the professional care the patients at Lawrence General were getting on a daily basis.”

As a side note, Duggan said that a large part of his recovery was the quality of the food at LGH.

“Before all this happened, I used to eat one big meal a day, but the food here was so damn good it was like getting restaurant food for every meal. I actually looked forward to the three daily meals I was getting. Every day it was extreme comfort food for me no matter what the menu item was, because the quality of the food was really something to look

forward to.”

“I know that sounds a little crazy to hear that hospital food was that good, but I can say unequivocally that the quality of the food at LGH was a really big part of why I recovered faster than my family expected, and why I went to rehab in much better shape than anyone expected.”

We at the Valley Patriot prayed very hard during those early days Duggan’s life was in jeopardy and we worked even harder to keep this information off of Facebook and away from the public until he was out of the woods and in recovery mode. Most people - even among his friends and family - didn’t even know Duggan was ill until the day he posted he was being discharged from the hospital and on his way to rehab.

We now want Tom’s friends and loyal readers to know that we did this on purpose because these were Tom’s

wishes. As most of you who regularly read this newspaper already know, there are some very powerful, very corrupt politicians, judges, and businessmen in the Merrimack Valley who have taken every opportunity they could to try and have this newspaper shut down to silence Duggan from exposing their graft and illegal activities.

For those people to find out early on that Duggan was struggling to survive would have provided the perfect opportunity to start another boycott, or manufacture another bogus scandal, to try and get advertisers to stop supporting the paper. And with Tom unable to fight off such attacks because of his coma, it could have been the end of this newspaper. We could not let that happen.

NEXT MONTH: What the heroes of Lawrence General faced when Tom Duggan was brought to their doorstep in the middle of the night. ◇

## My Efforts to Increase Cultural Funding in the Valley

Ryan Hamilton

STATE REP., METHUEN/HAVERHILL


The Merrimack Valley is home to some of our Commonwealth’s finest arts and culture organizations.

As the State Representative for Methuen and Haverhill, I can tour many of these historic landmarks and cultural attractions. This month, I want to highlight some of the significant events and projects underway in our community.

September started strong with the 100th anniversary Feast of Three Saints in Lawrence, hosted by St. Alfio’s Society. Dating back to the arrival of Sicilian-Italian immigrants in the late 1800s to early 1900s, Greater Lawrence has been a hub for Italian Americans across the region to come together and celebrate their shared heritage and religion. I have been going to the Feast for as long as I can remember. It is a great way to celebrate the Merrimack Valley’s rich Italian heritage and see friends and family on Labor Day weekend. The start of the month also saw the 51st Annual Lebanese Mahrajan Festival and the

Bread and Roses Heritage Festival in Lawrence. I can remember going to the Mahrajan festival when they had it in Methuen. Between the food, music, and rich Lebanese culture, it is one of my favorite events of the year. Then, to top it off, we celebrate those in the labor movement who have done so much for working people with the Bread and Roses festival. Whether honoring our region’s rich labor history or learning more about the many cultures across the Merrimack Valley, this time of year is an excellent opportunity for residents to connect with their roots and explore something new.

On the state level, I am proud to partner with my delegation members in the House and Senate to uplift our region as a growing destination for arts and culture. In early September, I toured the Haverhill Center for Historic New England, an organization dedicated to collecting and preservation of essential artifacts, objects, and stories from throughout New England’s vibrant history. Coupled with the \$25,000 in funding I secured for Creative Haverhill’s Cogswell ArtSpace in the FY24 budget, I am confident that the



city of Haverhill, along with our region at large, will continue to grow into a must-see spot for tourists and residents alike. The economic potentials of the Merrimack Valley are unparalleled – and I look forward to helping foster this future for all of us.

As always, please don’t hesitate to contact my office with any ideas, concerns, or questions at ryan.hamilton@mahouse.gov or 617-722-2090. ◇

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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Valley Patriot, Inc., PO Box 453, North Andover, MA 01845.

Letters to the editor, columns and op/eds can be submitted to [valleypatriot@aol.com](mailto:valleypatriot@aol.com). The Valley Patriot is not responsible for the opinions expressed in submitted letters or columns. It is the policy of The Valley Patriot not to edit or exclude submitted material based on content.

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**News tips:** Send anonymous news-tips to [valleypatriot@aol.com](mailto:valleypatriot@aol.com). We respect the anonymity of our sources if requested.

**President/Publisher:** Tom Duggan, Jr.  
**SALES: (978) 771-4091**

**Corrections:** Please contact the editors at [valleypatriot@aol.com](mailto:valleypatriot@aol.com)

The Valley Patriot can be found in more than 800 locations in 48 communities in Massachusetts and NH.

The Valley Patriot is not responsible for, nor do we necessarily share the opinions of columnists and contributors that are published in the paper. Columns, by definition, are opinion pieces.

***The Valley Patriot is printed by Graphic Development in West Hanover, MA***

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# Bridging the Digital Divide: The Affordable Connectivity Program

Pavel Payano

STATE SENATOR, 1ST ESSEX DISTRICT

In our modern, interconnected world, the internet has become a fundamental necessity, impacting every facet of our lives, from education and healthcare to employment and communication. However, for numerous families and individuals, a formidable obstacle remains - the digital divide. The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) emerges as a pioneering initiative dedicated to confronting this challenge head-on, ensuring affordable internet access for all. In this article, we delve into the significance of the ACP, its beneficiaries, and how people can participate. The ACP stands at the forefront of President Joe Biden’s vision to provide internet access to every American household and business by 2030. It is a powerful tool in dismantling the digital divide that still affects many communities.

Despite its potential to transform lives, the ACP has not reached all eligible individuals. Shockingly, an analysis of enrollment and census data by the Associated Press reveals that less than 40% of eligible households have taken advantage of this program. The ACP provides monthly subsidies of up to \$30,

and in some cases, up to \$75, making internet access more affordable for low-income households. Unfortunately, this vital federal initiative, designed to ease broadband costs for those who need it most, is set to expire next year.

### Empowering Our Seniors: A Collaborative Effort

Recently, a significant effort was made by my office to ensure that the ACP reaches those who need it, particularly our senior citizens. This Monday, I had the privilege of collaborating with Juana Matias, Regional Administrator of HUD, at Valebrooks Apartments. Together, we conducted a workshop designed to assist our cherished elders in signing up for the Affordable Connectivity Program. This initiative was a crucial step in ensuring that our senior community members have the tools and resources required to stay connected, access essential services, and actively participate in today’s digital age.

If you or someone you know might qualify for this program, I encourage you to explore its benefits and sign up today. I am committed to continuing these workshops in partnership with Housing Authorities in Haverhill, Lawrence, Methuen, and beyond, as together, we strive for a more inclusive and connected future.

Why the Affordable Connectivity



### Program Matters

1. **Equal Opportunity:** The internet is not a luxury; it’s a lifeline. It levels the playing field, offering equal opportunities for education, job searches, telehealth services, and staying connected with loved ones. The ACP recognizes this and strives to make internet access affordable for all, regardless of income.

2. **Educational Equity:** With the increasing use of online learning, students without internet access can fall behind. The ACP helps bridge this educational gap by ensuring that students have the connectivity they need for remote learning, research, and collaboration.

3. **Access to Healthcare:** Telehealth services have become essential, especially in times of crisis. The ACP makes it possible for individuals to access medical consultations and services online, improving healthcare outcomes and access for underserved communities.

4. **Job Opportunities:** Job searches, online applications, and remote work are becoming the norm. The ACP empowers job seekers to access job listings, prepare resumes, and participate in virtual interviews, expanding employment opportunities.

### Who the Affordable Connectivity Program Helps

The ACP is designed to assist eligible low-income households and families in need. Specifically, it benefits:

1. **Families in Need:** The program supports families struggling to make ends meet by providing subsidies to reduce the

cost of internet service.

2. **Students:** Students from low-income families can access online resources, participate in virtual classrooms, and complete assignments, ensuring they receive a quality education regardless of their socioeconomic status.

3. **Seniors:** Older adults can connect with healthcare providers, access telemedicine services, and stay in touch with loved ones, reducing feelings of isolation.

4. **Job Seekers:** Individuals seeking employment can access online job postings, submit applications, and participate in video interviews, streamlining the job search process.

### How to Sign Up for the Affordable Connectivity Program

Signing up for the ACP is a straightforward process:

1. **Check Eligibility:** Determine if you qualify for the program. Eligibility criteria often include income-based requirements or participation in federal assistance programs like SNAP or Medicaid.

2. **Enroll in the Program:** Go to the following link and apply: <https://www.getinternet.gov/>

3. **Call Internet Provider:** Call your internet provider and let them know that you are enrolled in the ACP and provide any required documentation.

4. **Receive Subsidy:** If approved, you will receive a monthly subsidy that reduces your internet bill, making it more affordable. ♦

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# Our Shared Journey: Charting a Brighter Future for Lawrence, Methuen in the Heart of the Valley

Dear friends and neighbors of Lawrence and Methuen,

When I think of the Merrimack Valley, I envision a lively mosaic of history, culture, and innovation. At its heart lie two cities — Lawrence and Methuen — that embody resilience, community spirit, and potential. As your state representative, every decision I make is rooted in the aspiration to elevate and celebrate our beloved cities.

Lawrence, with its storied mills and rivers, has always been a vessel of industry and enterprise. Today, it houses gems like Helfrich Brother Boiler Works, Inc. They're not just a Lawrence-based business; they're a testament to the innovation that thrives within our community. Their unparalleled expertise in repairing and installing boiler pressure parts is sought after nationwide. But their brilliance doesn't end there. Their work in fabricating ASME pressure vessels has ripple effects across dynamic industries, from semiconductors to aerospace. Their accomplishments shine a spotlight on Lawrence's continued relevance in the nation's industrial and technological landscape.

Methuen, on the other hand, with

its architectural landmarks and scenic beauty, complements Lawrence's industrial spirit. It's a place where families grow, businesses flourish, and history is revered. Together, these cities represent the best of what the Merrimack Valley offers — a blend of heritage, community, and forward-thinking dynamism.

It's with immense pride and deep understanding of the dual essence of our cities that I nominated Helfrich Brother Boiler Works for the annual manufacturing awards. Their anticipated accolade, while a testament to their excellence, is a shared victory. It's a reflection of the hard work, innovation, and determination that defines Lawrence and Methuen.

Strengthening our collaborative spirit, Senator Payano, Representative Moran, and I have united to secure a substantial grant of \$250,000 for Helfrich Brother Boiler Works. This is not just an economic boost; it's a promise of growth. We are investing in new opportunities, with the potential of adding up to 18 new jobs, reinforcing our commitment to the prosperity of our community members.

But beyond these numbers, it's the



everyday stories and experiences that keep me grounded. My role as a volunteer crossing guard at Parthum Middle School in Lawrence offers me daily insights into our community's pulse. It reinforces the importance of safety, community engagement, and being present. This hands-on experience electrifies my commitment, especially as I work with the Joint Committee of Public Safety and Homeland Security, to safeguard our future — our children.

In conclusion, as we look ahead, let's remember that our strength lies in unity,

understanding, and shared aspirations. Lawrence and Methuen, with their unique attributes, collectively form a beacon of hope and potential in the Merrimack Valley. And as we navigate the challenges and opportunities, know that my dedication to you remains resolute. Together, we will chart a brighter, more prosperous future for our cities and our community at large.

Warmly and with relentless commitment,  
Francisco Paulino  
Your State Representative

## Winning the New Cold War Against China

Ken Willette

VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Chinese President Xi Jinping has mobilized his totalitarian regime against the United States and her allies, with a strategy that has all the hallmarks of a new Cold War. If leadership in Washington is blind to this new reality, we must vote for new leaders in 2024.

I am fearful that Biden and his negotiating team will repeat the same colossal mistakes of FDR, who trusted Stalin's word that he would not seek a sphere of influence in Europe after World War II. The fact that White House envoy John Kerry couldn't even acknowledge that Xi is a dictator during a recent congressional hearing, leads me to believe that a bold course of action reminiscent of Reagan's Cold War strategy is paramount to our national security.

Reagan won that contest of good versus evil because he recognized that the Soviet Union's vision of humanity was rotten to the core. That the foundation could collapse if sufficient external pressure was applied. Reagan's modernization and rebuilding of America's military might, bolstered by our inherent wealth and technological superiority, bankrupted any Soviet efforts to match our forces and liberated Eastern Europe.

Our nation's complacency during hostile Chinese military incursions across Asia must cease immediately. Taiwan, the Philippines, Japan, Australia, and South Korea have been witnessing missile tests, illegal military bases, naval and aerial confrontations and other provocative actions by either China or her puppet state in North Korea.

Meanwhile, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and state-owned businesses have purchased farmland near our military installations in the United States. The CCP served as the lowest qualified bidder to construct new railcars for the T system in Boston, which have experienced numerous technical problems since delivery. And although some federal and state government entities have banned their workers from using TikTok due to data collection concerns, the rest of our population, especially our children, are vulnerable to privacy issues. Why is Congress and the President allowing these questionable transactions to continue?

Imagine during the height of the Cold War, the voters found out that the Soviets purchased land near our air bases, constructed our subways over American companies and had an undue programming influence on our children. They would throw the bums out of office who allowed such a mess. Where is the outrage in 2023?

The CCP still engages in massive intellectual property theft, unfairly subsidizes their companies at the expense of foreign competition and sends spies into our research facilities and universities. In fact, XI could invoke an anti-espionage law at any time—which theoretically empowers the communists to target the sensitive data of any foreign firms operating in China.

As leaders of the free world, the United States can never fully trust Xi, but we can achieve peace through a new mutual defense alliance of Asian democracies, similar to the now defunct Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, and enforceable international treaties.

Furthermore, we must decouple

our economy from theirs before it is too late. Trump already started the transformation to confront this new Cold War on multiple fronts. He applied punitive tariffs against China, ushered in a new and robust North American free trade agreement (USMCA), encouraged companies to relocate back to America through corporate tax reform, opened our natural resources and substantially increased military spending. As a direct result, domestic manufacturing has boomed, products are being sourced once more in our hemisphere and we are curtailing our supply chains from bureaucratic entanglements in China.

COVID-19 revealed the sinister authoritarian mentality of Xi, who refused to let WHO teams into the hot zone of Wuhan for months during a global crisis. Xi has created a disturbing cult of personality, akin to Mao and Stalin. He has consolidated power through his exclusive, uncontested authority, weakening the central committee and removing key senior members. He has rewritten communist dogma in his image, and instituted a philosophy that the nation must endure sacrifices to achieve victory against the West. Instead of promoting a consumer and entrepreneurial class, he is assigning the newest generation to a life of unwanted industrial drudgery. Economic liberalization has not translated into capitalism, free enterprise, and freedom.

The last time there was such a stark consolidation of power in China, it tragically occurred under Mao. Approximately 80 million people were killed during the Great Leap Forward—twice the estimated deaths under the Stalin regime. Is the world prepared for a similar course of action under Xi?

Given the systemic 'reeducation' and persecution of the Uyghurs Muslim minority, the Orwellian lockdown of millions during COVID and the continued threats against perceived enemies abroad, how can Xi be identified as an honest broker of peace?

Xi props up the repressive socialist regimes of Venezuela, Cuba, and North Korea. He gives aid and comfort to Russia and Iran, whose actions have caused the direct deaths of Americans and Syrian civilians.

However, China's centralization of power and its authoritarian policies have created a paper tiger ripe for potential revolution. The youth unemployment rate is at least 20% and could be as high as 50%. China is so corrupt with statistics that it has stopped even publishing data on youth employment and consumer activity. China's overall debt-to-GDP ratio is fast approaching 300%. A dangerous commercial and housing construction bubble has developed, which could engulf 30% of the economy. Defaults on loans are worsening by the day. And Chinese workers placed much of their savings into these dubious ventures. The population is declining, and because of the disastrous one child policy, China's elderly population will soon explode.

We must expand our military superiority in the Pacific aligned with our Asian allies, curtail trade incentives with Xi, encourage companies to return jobs domestically and pass sweeping reforms in Congress to restrict any further CCP activities on the home front. Peace through Strength will prevail once again over the party of concessions and ineffectual moderation. ◇



IN YOUR CORNER with AUDITOR DIZOGLIO

# State Audior DiZoglio Makes Sure There Are No Unfunded Local Madates

Hello Valley Patriot Readers,

Within the Office of the State Auditor is the Division of Local Mandates (DLM), a critical resource for our cities and towns.

DLM was established in 1980 under the property tax limit initiative known as Proposition 2 ½. The DLM team assists in determining whether state laws, rules, and regulations fall within the scope of the Local Mandate Law, which was created to address local officials’ concerns about the State Legislature enacting laws requiring local action without providing the necessary funds to cover the associated costs.

Although many state mandates are crafted to address important statewide concerns, the Local Mandate Law ensures that unfunded mandates do not pose unfair financial or administrative challenges for local governments. If a city or town believes that a state law, regulation, or rule is imposed upon them without adequate funding, they can request a mandate determination. If it is determined that an unfunded mandate exists, DLM provides an analysis of the municipal financial impact.

The Massachusetts General Laws allow DLM to examine any state law or regulation that has a significant local cost impact, regardless of whether it is an unfunded mandate. Because of this law, DLM also releases reports known

as “municipal impact studies” or “6B reports” that examine various aspects of state law affecting municipal finances, which include recommendations that are designed to make government work better. Over the years, DLM has issued reports on many topics, including public infrastructure, regional school districts and municipal police in-service training, educational services for students in foster care and state care, and property tax exemptions for senior citizens.

DLM also plays a role in election cost certifications by ensuring that all 351 communities are timely surveyed to accurately determine election costs eligible for reimbursement. Cost certification ensures that millions of dollars are returned to cities and towns to cover election-related expenses. Based on this certification, the Secretary of the Commonwealth provides funding to cities and towns to offset expenses.

If you have any questions for DLM - we welcome you to reach out to the Director of the Division of Local Mandates, Jana DiNatale, at 857-242-5399. And as always, feel free to contact my office with questions anytime via email at [auditor@sao.state.ma.us](mailto:auditor@sao.state.ma.us) or by phone at (617) 727-2075. If you’re ever in the State House, I hope you’ll stop by and visit our team in room 230!

Yours in service,  
Diana



State Auditor Diana DiZoglio is from Methuen and writes an exclusive column for the Valley Patriot Every month







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# Phil Thibault Hasn't Learned Lesson in Dracut

By Brian Genest  
VALLEY PATRIOT DRACUT COLUMNIST

## EYE ON DRACUT

If you think Dracut's most rejected perennial candidate—nine-time loser Phil Thibault—couldn't be any more bitter than he already is about being the town's monumental loser, think again. This time, Dracut's self-proclaimed perpetual victim Phil Thibault and his fruit loop friends are lamenting because he wasn't appointed to a town board, again. Phil Thibault, the guy who has come up short in eight elections for selectman (and who lost an election for housing authority, too), apparently thought he'd be perfect to fill the open seat... on the school committee.

Let's put Phil Thibault's electoral history in historical perspective: He's choked in selectmen's races in 2005, 2007, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2020, 2021 and 2022, after getting his butt kicked in that housing authority election. He's lost electoral contests against all five sitting selectmen, including three head-to-head matchups against Selectman Joe DiRocco. In other words, Phil Thibault has lost as many elections as Hillary Clinton, Stacey Abrams and Beto O'Rourke combined, plus two more. In his own mind, however, that makes Phil Thibault fully qualified to serve on the school committee, apparently.

Phil Thibault had perhaps the shortest candidacy for school committee in town history: He announced he was in the race

and then a nanosecond later he was out. In between, Phil Thibault apparently realized he was unable to muster five votes from the Board of Selectmen and School Committee. (Members of those two boards ended up unanimously appointing Rob Sheppard, a guy who actually ran for school committee last year and finished third in that five way-race behind winners Allison Volpe and Dr. Linda Trouville.)

Make no mistake about it: Phil Thibault's inability to secure that school committee appointment is a game changer; he's finally lost the support of some who previously wasted a lot of political capital, time, money, effort on a guy who continues to lose and lose and lose and lose and lose and lose and lose. It was bound to happen eventually because Phil Thibault's not just the likely loser in every contest, he's the proven loser and proven to be Dracut's biggest loser.

Meanwhile, one of the main reasons Phil Thibault can't win anything is that he's surrounded himself with some of the most nasty and negative voices in our town, those who constantly try to tear down Dracut. Just ask current School Committee Chairman Allison Volpe, who's been under attack from Phil Thibault's friends in print, on cable tv

and on social media since he dropped out of the running.

On September 12, an author on What's Happening Dracut who did not identify themselves went after Volpe on their Facebook page, alleging she broke the school committee bylaws by failing to hold a reorganization when Sheppard was appointed to the board. Most of those who bothered to respond defended Volpe. One person called the page's posters "armchair quarterbacks" who try "to create controversy and drama because they think they have all the answers." Another called their posts "ridiculous" and "sensationalist." Yet another person said it was "much ado about nothing," considering the other issues facing the school committee and town.

Volpe also responded, explaining that a reorganization is done after the annual town election, not when a member is appointed to fill a vacancy. She added that she'd be happy to hold a reorganization if that is the will of the committee. (Where was the outcry for a reorganization when Dr. Linda Trouville was appointed to fill Betsy Murphy's unexpired term? Cue the hypocritical crickets.)

Volpe, of course, was attacked by Phil Thibault who accused her of not providing Sheppard with the same rights



and privileges of other members. "to (sic) be dismissive of his membership as appointed does no one service," Phil Thibault posted.

Volpe wasn't tolerating any of it and responded to Phil Thibault directly, tagging him in her comment on the original post. "Phil Thibault, no one is dismissing Mr. Rob Sheppard. As you will see he will be afforded the same rights as all members. I am dismissing the nonsense this page likes to spout to increase clicks."

With "friends" like Phil Thibault, Allison Volpe doesn't need any enemies, apparently.

Anyway, here's what the Lowell Sun Here's what the Lowell Sun said when Phil Thibault lost his selectman's race in 2020. "It just might be that in Thibault's

DRACUT: PAGE 18

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# A Tribute to Frank Cann, Family Man, Philanthropist

case, familiarity breeds more contempt than content. Buoyed by the backing of several town influencers – including former selectmen – one would have thought it was his election to lose, which he did. It could also be payback for the decision by that screening panel he ran not to put interim – now permanent – Town Manager Ann Vandal on the list of finalists for that position.”

Bingo! It wasn’t Phil Thibault’s job to fire the interim town manager and that’s exactly what he tried to do by not including Vandal on the short list. Thankfully, Phil Thibault wasn’t ultimately involved in the final hiring decision back in 2020 because selectmen scrapped the tarnished search process, got rid of him and kept Vandal.

Since that time, Phil Thibault continues to spew toxicity about our town, elected officials, private citizens, and business owners on his bestie John Zimini’s unwatchable cable TV show, a local version of Wayne’s World with a similar level of maturity and cast of characters. Phil Thibault’s television appearances are wicked dull and hilariously sad, just like him. During the 2022 town election, Phil Thibault was calling Dracut sleepy. In 2021, Phil Thibault said our town

was starting to rot. What’s sleepy is Phil Thibault’s campaigns and what’s rotten is the way he talks about Dracut.

Why would voters want to elect Phil Thibault, a guy who hates our town so much? Thankfully, Dracut isn’t buying what Phil Thibault has been selling. In fact, voters keep sending him the same message—” thanks, but no thanks”—but Phil Thibault doesn’t want to hear it, apparently.

Regardless, Phil Thibault thinks he’s the smartest guy in the room, no matter who’s in the room. Just ask him. Speaking of which, Phil Thibault always wants to be in the room, apparently. He’s been lurking around town government for decades, keeping the seats warm on a bunch of town boards. If you’ve gotten Phil Thibault’s self-centered political mailings throughout the years, you’ve seen the extensive list, but not a single accomplishment or new idea to benefit Dracut. Like George Costanza, Phil Thibault can’t wait to tell anyone who will listen that he’s an architect. You’d be hard pressed to meet a more self-absorbed politician; the thing Phil Thibault likes to talk about the most is himself.

When there’s an opening on any town

board these days, and not just the school committee, Phil Thibault rushes his application over to town hall right away. In a town of 34,000 people, Phil Thibault always thinks he’s the most qualified person for the job. The reality is that Dracut doesn’t need Phil Thibault to sit on another board, we need someone— anyone—other than him! He’s stale, his lack of ideas is stale, and so are his not-ready-for-primetime pals.

Phil Thibault has been very angry ever since he was rejected by the Board of Selectmen for the newly created at-large seat on the Zoning Bylaw Review Committee last December. The board majority cited conflict of interest, as Phil Thibault is an architect who conducts business in town. Instead of reflecting inward, Phil Thibault lashed out. But the truth hurts: In 2016, Phil Thibault resigned from the Planning Board after speaking with the state’s Ethics Commission and then he went on his buddy Warren Shaw’s AM radio program to talk about it. Shaw’s sidekick Shawn Ashe posted the audio recording on his Dracut Forum blog. (<https://www.dracutforum.com/index.php/2016/08/28/phil-thibault-resigns-from-planning-board/>)

Phil Thibault should look in the mirror, especially if he wants to talk about ethics and conflicts of interest. Or read the Lowell Sun. In October of 2020, the newspaper exposed some of Phil Thibault’s completely unethical and self-serving behavior at DATV.

“Imagine if Phil Thibault had been elected to the Dracut Board of Selectmen. Even though the Dracut Access Cable Television board of directors, on which Thibault serves, is technically not a government body, Thibault apparently thought there was nothing improper with landing a \$10,000 contract to help design DATV’s new studio, as Thibault is an architect.”

Phil Thibault is always good for one thing: a laugh. Phil Thibault’s short-lived school committee candidacy is no exception. Sadly, however, Phil Thibault keeps failing to learn his lesson. Class, and class clown, dismissed.

—Brian Genest is the producer and host of Eye On Dracut, winner of the Hometown Media Award for News, sponsored by Lucky Oil. ♦



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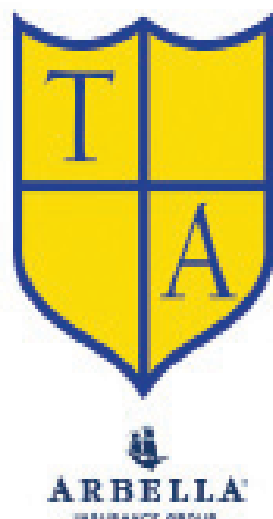


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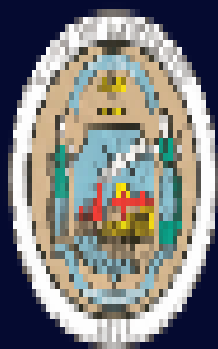
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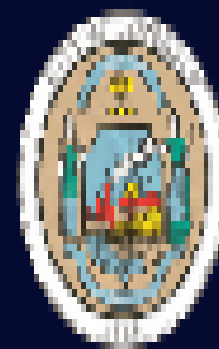
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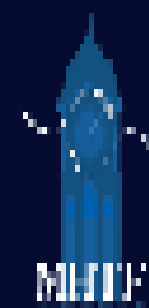
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# Emotional Eating/Finding Balance with Food

## KANE

VALLEY PATRIOT MASCOT/COLUMNIST

Kane has felt stressed out lately! He finds himself running to food to feel better! He has been sneaking food when nobody is around, hiding the wrappers in his house, and plotting and planning how to get more! Yesterday he almost stole his human’s whole pizza. Although the food is great in the moment, it doesn’t really make him feel better. In fact, it doesn’t really sooth his stress. It feels rather out of balance. So, Kane went to a counselor, a library, and did research late at night online and found out he is an emotional eater! Kane decided he would like to have a healthy relationship with food so here is his journey.

Kane learned that many people have a complex relationship with food. According to a 2013 article from the American Psychological Association named “ Stress and Eating” (Are teens Adopting Adults’ Stress habits?), 38% of adults say they have overeaten foods in the past month due to stress. These individuals reported they do so because it helps them distract from their worries. The article reports half of these adults (49%) report engaging in these behaviors weekly or more. Some also site habit as a reason it continues. So

## KANE’S KORNER

Kane learned he was not alone. I guess it was good for him to look at this and be honest about where he is with his relationship with food, and where he would like to be.

His counselor suggested he make a list of how his day was going. It is important to keep a log of whether there was an emotional eating episode or not and what emotions triggered the episode. So, Kane got to work on this. He discovered he was mad yesterday morning when his sister Ruby went out with his humans, and he was left alone. He felt lonely and ignored. At the time he didn’t know she was going to the vet. No thank you to that thought Kane. Anyway, right away he tried to open the bread drawer to see if he could find some crackers. Maybe feeling mad, lonely, and ignored would lessen if he found crackers or even those lame dog cookies his human buys. Kane told his counselor this was hard to look at in general. He felt judged by himself and the whole



thing felt kind of raw even though being honest with himself was the way to go.

Kane kept his food and emotions log and learned that foods were not good or bad. In fact, all foods in moderation creates a healthy mindset towards food. He chuckled at thinking that twinkles don’t rob banks. However, being healthy means eating each meal, and two snacks to keep his metabolism moving and his body satisfied so he doesn’t confuse physical hunger with emotional hunger and the most important element was not judging yourself. It is important for Kane to think of his journey as fact finding and trying different approaches to see what works. Kane learned that recovery from food challenges is never

a straight line. Instead of shaming himself, Kane will say it’s me Kane, I struggle with this, but I will get back on track the next meal or snack. Forward movement is movement.

Kane learned from his counselor and reading that black and white thinking is an enemy to his recovery. Saying negative things like you are weak, you messed up again, you can’t do this just zaps the positive energy you could use for change. What about today I learned I can’t have a whole cake on my counter, or bringing my lunch to work is best for me. Thinking of the change as caring for yourself in a positive way. Being kind during the transitions.

So, in review Kane learned the following points that have helped him develop a positive relationship with food.

Keep an emotion and food log.  
Enjoy all foods, with treats in moderation.

Approach your journey with kindness and compassion towards yourself.

Notice black and white (all or nothing thinking) and make room for the gray instead, room to explore what happened and what you could do differently next time.

As for Kane, he discovered sometimes he just enjoys being a bit naughty. So instead of stealing food and using it to manage his emotions, he hides phones, keys, and papers on his humans. He even steals laundry. You should see them looking for it. He would blame Ruby, but they know she never does anything wrong.

Happy balanced eating to all. Food is meant to be enjoyed.

Kane Peaslee  
Columnist Valley Patriot  
Woof Woof ♦



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# YOU, the People

Philippe Thibault

VALLEY PATRIOT DRACUT COLUMNIST

I occasionally like to say, tongue in cheek, that the Constitution of the United States was never ratified in Dracut. All the rights and privileges afforded by that document cease to have validity and relevance within the town borders. I find it humorous and laugh, until it is true. There is a mindset among some in political office that the public need not concern themselves with the complicated and complex workings of government. The unwashed masses just cannot comprehend the needs of government. Although, it was my understanding that the government should understand the needs of the public.

Take for instance, the latest kerfuffle over the fulfillment of an elected official’s unexpired term due to a resignation. Joe Wilkie, former School Committee Chairman, resigned recently with nine months left to his term. I am sure the resignation was a difficult decision to make with a brief time left. There is a difficult balance that must be made by people dedicated themselves to public service. We wish Mr. Wilkie the best and thank him for his service to the Twon of Dracut and the School Committee. The resignation sets in motion not only a “process,” but Massachusetts Law for the appointment of a replacement member. For Dracut, “we don’t need no stinkin’ laws!”

The law would have the Chair of the affected board notify the Board of Selectman within thirty days of the resignation and the need for appointment. The appointment in this instance would be made by both the affected committee, the School Committee, and the Board of Selectmen. This needs to happen one week after the notice is posted. There is another scenario for Dracut. The notification is the same for the resignation, at least we start from the same point. The “process” set by the Selectmen Chair is to post a notice of interest for ten days. There is another divergence that is not written but imposed by Alison Genest, Chair of the Board of Selectmen. She wishes to have the School Committee provide only a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen for the appointment. A recommendation much like in other instances, has been ignored by the Troika, Genest, DiRocco, and Kopcinski, holding power. The appointment is scheduled for the next Board of Selectmen meeting. I hope the School Committee pushes back and demands their rightful place to vote on the appointment. There is also the concern that the names of the potential appointees will not be made public. A secret public official if you may.

Why should Alison Genest stop there? She has inserted herself into every facet of government in Dracut under the guise of being Selectmen Board Chair. She created an ad hoc committee and made herself chair while being and an abutter to the property the ad hoc committee was overseeing. Alison Genest removed a competent member of the Zoning Bylaw Review Committee and inserted herself; devoid of any zoning or planning experience. She has cast a pall of dread over many Town boards, commissions, and employees. She will not be deterred, and there is still



more.  
The Town Charter was crafted by a Town Charter Commission and adopted in 1985 at the Annual Town Meeting. There were eleven members of the public elected to the office of Charter Commisssion. There were some sweeping changes: a Town Manager, an appointed Planning Board, and the creation of a Permanent Building Committee to name but a few. The Town Charter called for a review at ten-year intervals. The first review was in 2005, only twenty years behind schedule. There were no significant changes made, I suspect, because no one desired an in-depth review. The next review was made in 2015 by the Board of Selectmen. The most notable change made was for the qualifications required to be appointed Town Manager. The qualifications were diminished, and standards lowered. Another Charter review is being discussed by the Board of Selectmen, and Alison Genest does not want your involvement.  
The Town of Dracut’s “constitution” will not be decided by the consent of the governed. Department Heads are initially reviewing the Charter. There has been some debate as to bringing in a consultant, the Collins Center from Boston, to help shepherd the Selectmen through the process for compliance with the State of Massachusetts laws and regulations. The Collins Center assisted in the search for a replacement Town Manager when Former Manager Duggan resigned. You can imagine who did not like independent thought then and will not tolerate it now. Alison Genest gesturing to her laptop at a public meeting said, “we don’t need a consultant, we have these.” What a world we live in, when a thirty-minute Google search is presumed to be the equivalent of thirty years of experience. It was said at the Selectmen meeting that after the Department Heads, Town Staff and the Selectmen made their review the townspeople would be “permitted to make comments.”  
Hopefully, Selectmen Archinski or Santiago-Hutchings will be making a motion to create an elected Charter Commission for the review. They both have faith in the citizenry of Dracut to govern themselves and determine how they wish to be governed, unlike Chair Alison Genest. Imagine Alison Genest writing the Constitution of the United States these days. “You the People....” ◇



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TOM DUGGAN’S NOTEBOOK



The processional cart of the three Italian saints at the Feast’s final day on Sunday, starting at Holy Rosary Shrine in Lawrence.

WINSTON SAYS!



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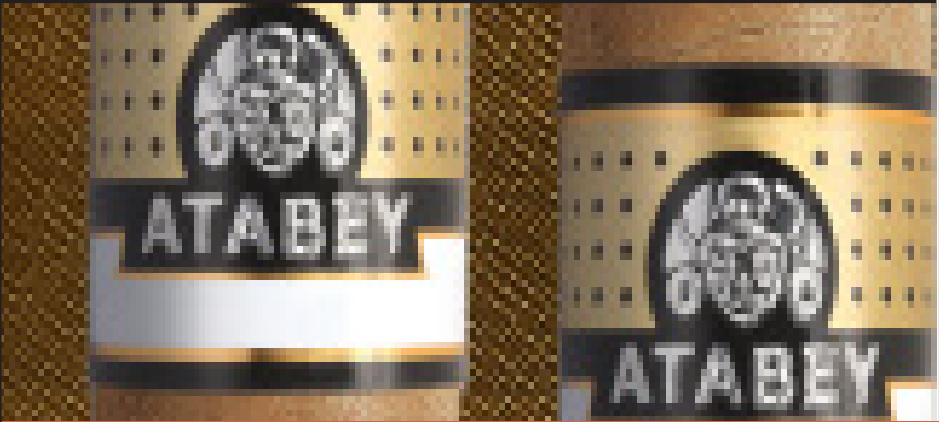


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Miss Teen Massachusetts Yanelyn Quintana reads The Valley Patriot! Yanelyn was on hand at The Movement Family’s (TMF) weekly dinner for the homeless last month at the Buckley Garage on Common St. in Lawrence.

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Staying Together

Dr. Pierre Ghassibi  
VALLEY PATRIOT MEDICAL COLUMNIST

Me: Hadaa, say this again, please. I have never heard of it before.

Hadaa: There is so much divorce, so many associates” dissociate,” and many coworkers find that they cannot work together. The situation is everywhere. It is very often not life itself that causes unhappiness, but relationship problems. It is the “Tower of Babel.”

We need to avoid this Tower of Babel if we want to be happy. I have even met people who hated their parents. A two-year-old has pride and insulting them does not get forgotten.

I think that the solution is for us to treat each other with a lot of deference. Yet, spouses and colleagues irritate us because their ways are different from ours, their thinking, their feelings, are different. They also have their idiosyncrasies; but so do we! Remember that men are from Mars and women from Venus.

Perhaps snapping at others, offending, showing angry disapproval can be avoided. We can always maintain great civility in our interactions, even if we totally disagree. How do we know who is wrong and who is right? Each one of us adamantly believes that we are right and the other is wrong. Wars have caused so

much misery in our history. Time to stop.

Life is not tailored to our measurements. We have, to a certain extent, to accept and accept and accept. Peace is far more important than getting our way. Anger, jealousy, and hostilities are poisoning our life and yet, they are embedded in our nature. Accept Nature, or if we want happiness, then we have to disobey Nature. This is enlightenment.

I have witnessed in zoos that hyenas and even crocodiles fall in love with the humans who raised them, not only lions and tigers do. Our parents are more important to us than ourselves. They are our soul more than our own soul. They are our umbilical cord, our history. This is why a spouse has to have a lot of respect for the in-laws. Your wife can criticize her parents, but you should not. Treat both her and her parents with extreme respect if you want to be a winner. The Law of Attraction says that if we want respect and love, we have to give respect and love. Love your wife’s family more than you love her if you want her extreme devotion and respect. I will not discuss exceptions, which can be real. But do accept and accept and accept. Wanting life only our way is selfishness. Nature created us selfish. If we want to be happy and enjoy life, we have to disobey Nature! Why do we poison the waters that we need to quench our thirst? ◇



Mike Sullivan

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HERO: FROM PAGE 1

Army, Chris Manning began his career installing and supervising the installation of natural gas lines.

His service to his nation did not stop after leaving the Army, it took off when he joined the Haverhill American Legion. With the rest of the Legion members, he is heavily involved in Veterans affairs with the City of Haverhill and the Veteran’s Administration. Chris and the Haverhill American Legion are closely partnered with the 100+ student US Marine Corp JROTC Unit at Haverhill High School. Chris says, “these JROTC students, are our Nation’s future.” As Post Commander, he oversees the Haverhill Legion’s involvement with the Legion’s official youth programs, baseball, softball, JROTC, Scouting, and Boy’s State. Chris, as the newly elected Post Commander, also quarterbackes the Post’s Red Cross Blood Drives, Scholarships, recruiting new members, and working with Haverhill’s other Veteran’s groups. Haverhill is blessed with an American Legion Post, a US Marine Corp League Detachment, an American Veterans Post (AMVETS), a Veterans of Foreign Wars Post (VFW), and a Disabled American Veterans Post (DAV).

How important is their work? In 2022, 90% of DAV funds collected nationwide, directly benefited veterans and families. Attaining a mere 10% in overhead cost, is a number most charitable organizations will never reach. DAV, Legion, AMVETS, VFW, and US Marine Corp League service programs do not overlap or duplicate local, state, or federal, government programs. These Veteran’s Organizations quietly pick up and fill the void left by US government agencies. Chris is most proud of the Haverhill Legion Post’s Children’s Welfare Fund, focused on making sure no child is left behind. The American Legion’s charity score is 91% with a four-star rating, according to the web site Charity Navigator. Chris and I discussed this, and I am happy to advise the Valley Patriot reader that “if the American Legion’s mission aligns with your beliefs, you can donate with confidence.”


Veteran, family man, tradesman, Commander of the Haverhill American Legion, Chris Manning’s work, serving our Nation’s Veterans and their families, make him a “Hero in Our Midst.”

The Haverhill, Methuen, Andover, and Dracut American Legion Posts ask all World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War Veterans, to call (603) 518-5368

and sign up for an Honor Flight to the Memorials in Washington DC! Veterans of all eras are asked to go the American Legion’s Web site [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org), and join the American Legion, our mission is working with Congress, Veterans, and the Community, preserving our Veteran’s Benefits for future generations and serving all Veterans and their families.

John Cuddy served in the US Navy’s Construction Battalions (also known as the Seabees) after retiring from the US Navy; he earned a bachelor’s in history and a master’s in economics from the University of Massachusetts on the Lowell Campus. He has been employed in Logistics at FedEx for the last 26 years. If you know a World War II, Korean War, or Vietnam War Veteran who would like their story told, please email him at [John.Cuddy@Yahoo.com](mailto:John.Cuddy@Yahoo.com) ◇





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# Bill’s TV Talk Mailbag

Bill Cushing

VALLEY PATRIOT TV COLUMNIST

From time to time, my column will feature questions asked by readers regarding the world of TV. Feel free to email me with any questions you may have about TV at BillsTVPodcast@gmail.com, and I’ll do my best to answer you and may feature your question in a future column. Here’s what we got!

*I remember hearing that ‘The Old Man’ on FX had been renewed for a second season. But that was a long time ago and I haven’t heard anything since. Are there still plans to move forward with the second season after the strike ends? – Sam from Lowell, MA*

You are right Sam, Jeff Bridges ‘The Old Man’ was definitely renewed for season 2. Production was well underway, then hit pause when the writers’ strike began in May. But everything I am hearing points to Season 2 definitely happening, once the strike ends.

*I’m a huge fan of ‘Bosch’ and really enjoyed the spinoff ‘Bosch: Legacy’ in its first season. When can we expect a second season and do you have any scoop on it? – Marion from Methuen, MA*

Well Jack you won’t have that long to wait. ‘Bosch: Legacy’ Season 2 is set to premiere on FreeVee on October 20 with the first 4 episodes, with two additional episodes dropping each Friday through Nov. 18. As far as scoop, I can tell you that Season 2 picks up right where Season 1 left off, with Harry’s daughter (played by Madison Lintz) having been abducted. Season 2 will feature the return of Detective J. Edgar (played by Bosch vet Jamie Hector), the character will be getting a spinoff of his own next year. By the way, ‘Bosch: Legacy’ has already been renewed for season 3.

*I really enjoy your column, Bill. Is there anything you can tell me about the new season of The Crown? – Lisa from Seabrook, NH*

Thanks Lisa. ‘The Crown’ is bracing for what could be the most controversial

moment in the series’ history. The death of Princess Diana. Producers say they have filmed the death scenes with “enormous sensitivity” and “It’s a very powerful and a very respectful episode.” They added “The audience will judge it in the end, but we think it’s been delicately, thoughtfully recreated. There’s a huge amount of respect from us all, we hope that’s evident.” The final season of ‘The Crown’ is set to premiere on Netflix later this year.

*I love the series ‘ Fargo,’ are we ever going to see another season? – Allie from Tewksbury, MA*

Allie, we definitely are going to see a new season of ‘ Fargo.’ Juno Temple (Ted Lasso) will star as Dot, a seemingly typical Midwestern housewife who finds herself in hot water with the authorities after an unexpected series of events. Jon Hamm (Mad Men) plays North Dakota Sheriff Roy Tillman, who has been searching for Dot for a long time. A rancher, preacher and a constitutional lawman, Roy believes that he is the law and therefore is above the law. ‘ Fargo’ premieres on FX, November 21.

*I keep waiting for Season 2 of ‘Reacher.’ Can you tell me when it’s coming back? – Arlene from North Andover, MA*

There is no official premiere date yet for the second season of ‘Reacher’ but I’m hearing that it will likely return in December or January. The second season will be based on the Jack Reacher novel “Bad Luck and Trouble.”

That’s all for this mailbag folks! Thanks for reading!

*If you have any questions about TV, you can email me at BillsTVPodcast@gmail.com. I will answer all of your questions and will feature some of the questions I receive in a future Mailbag column. Follow me on Twitter and Instagram @BillsTVPodcast and on Facebook at BillsTVPodcast for daily up-to-the-minute TV news and discussion. ♦*

# Retirement

Peter Larocque  
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Greetings everybody and God Bless you all. Hopefully, you are all doing well. I am going to get a little vulnerable this month and talk about something that I have been mulling around in my mind for some time now, the thought of retirement!

I have been asked, “What does retirement look like?” My answer was that I don’t know. Then, I moved unto, I was no longer getting up early in the morning to an alarm clock. God was taking me through this process little by little. Then it dawned on me with the help of my wife Pam that I don’t have to define my retirement like the world does. All through my working years, I looked forward to retiring and now that I am here, I ask, is this it? The world defines retirement as the action or fact of leaving one’s job and ceasing to work. Romans 12:2 says, “Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is.” NLT. Whether working or not working, the Bible still says in Colossians 3:23, “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,” NKJV. So, I am told even if I am not getting up each day to go to a specific job, I am still responsible for doing whatever I do, heartily as to the Lord and not to men.

Up until before summer started, I still was not fully embracing retirement. I was still telling myself that if a part-time job opened up near home, I would take it. Again, knowing what the Bible says about indecision, about being doubleminded, how can you receive anything from the Lord? James 1:7-8.

Now I know that I am leaving a major component out of this column which is the Financial Component, Let’s just say that is not an issue and therefore not part of this discussion. I don’t need to be that vulnerable.

What I do want to share with you is my journey, which is still in progress, defining what retirement is with the Holy Spirit helping me. Here is a working definition that we have come up with so far, meaning, my wife, myself, and the Holy Spirit.

I am upgrading to the preferment [the advancement or promotion in dignity, office, or station], of Magnifying God in situations. To be more awake and alert to God’s voice and freedom to move in the direction He would have me go. Each day is a new adventure, waking up and asking, “God what do you want me to do today?” To be awake means to be fully conscious and aware. To be alert refers to being quick and vigilant to notice unusual or difficult circumstances.

In 1 Corinthians 15:33-34, “Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits.” 34 Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.” NKJV. Then there is 1 Peter 5:8, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” NKJV.

Surrounding myself with like-minded people like family and friends and community which includes my Church family. God has blessed me with a

wonderful wife and family who all love God and His Son, Jesus Christ who are also filled with the Holy Spirit! All Bible-believing Children of God. No way are we perfect, but we are connected to the perfect one!

This brings me to this section of scripture, James 1:19-20, “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift [Prompt and ready] to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; 20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” NKJV. I heard someone once say that this is why God gave us two ears and one mouth. We need to listen to God and one another more than we speak! This is how I want to live out my remaining time on this earth, listening more than speaking. I am reminded of these verses in the Bible:

Deuteronomy 6:3, “Listen closely, Israel, to everything I say. Be careful to obey. Then all will go well with you, and you will have many children in the land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, promised you.” NLT.

Psalms 85:8, “I listen carefully to what God the LORD is saying, for he speaks peace to his people, his faithful ones. But let them not return to their foolish ways.” NLT.

John 10:27, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” NKJV.

Hebrews 3:15, “But never forget the warning: “Today you must listen to his voice. Don’t harden your hearts against him as Israel did when they rebelled.” NLT.

As I now embrace my full-time retirement, which is better defined as, upgrading to be more awake and alert to God’s voice and freedom to move in the direction He would have me go. As I conclude this column, I am reminded of the young Prophet Samuel learning to listen and obey the voice of the Lord. We read this in 1 Samuel 3:10, “Now the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel answered, “Speak, for Your servant hears.” NKJV.

May these words be our testimony!  
Love to you all,  
Peter Larocque  
peterlarocque@hotmail.com



The background of the flyer is a collage of three images. The top left shows an outdoor patio with a white railing, overlooking a river and a bridge under a clear blue sky. The top right shows the interior of a restaurant with round tables set with white cloths, glassware, and floral centerpieces, with large windows in the background. The bottom half of the image shows a large, diverse crowd of people at a live event, many with their mouths open as if cheering or singing along.

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